

PRESS CONFERENCE:

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Lt. Gen. Abud Qanbar, Commander, Baghdad Operational Command

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JAMES BAYS FROM AL-JAZEERA ENGLISH

REPORTERS 1-5

*REP1 = REPORTER 1

*INT = INTERPRETER

ABUD: Speaking in Arabic.

INT: We meet again. We are in the eighth month of carrying out Operation Fardh al-Qanoon. I would like to confirm here that all the indicators and everything indicates that Operation Fardh al-Qanoon has been successful. The level of the terrorist operations has reduced, and life came to normality in many parts of Baghdad. Our review that sticking to the situation through four axes. The first axis, development in the security situation. The second axis, the volunteering and recruitment in Baghdad filled, raising the standard of ability of Iraq's Security Forces. And the fourth axis is the operations in al-Fadhel area. The developments of the second situation and the decrease of the level of terrorist operations in Baghdad. All sectors in Baghdad have witnessed a decrease in terrorist

activities and [unintelligible] before the carrying out of Operation Fardh al-Qanoon. This has brought life to normal in many parts of Baghdad. The statistics and numbers which are being presented to you have been established according to scientific methods in cooperation with the Multi-National Forces. And we can sum up these results as follows. First, the terrorist operations have decreased by 59%. Second, the terrorist operations have decreased against innocent Iraqi people by 59% also. A decrease in operations against Iraqi security forces by 62%. A decrease in the assassination attempts for sectarian reasons by 72%. Fifth, a decrease in car bombs by 65%. Sixth, a decrease in the fatalities in the civilians killed by car bombs by 81%, including IEDs. Seven, a decrease in human casualties of civilians resulting from car bombs and IEDs by 80%. A decrease in the casualties of all terrorist activities by 77% as for the holy month of Ramadan this year. This Ramadan was different from all other Ramadans in 2005 and 2006. Terrorist operations have decreased to their lowest levels. The second axis, recruitment. We can summarize the issue of recruitment as follows. The authorities responsible for recruitment is the Committee of National Reconciliation, and we have coordinated with this committee to set up the procedures for this. And we have certain procedures when we receive the new recruitments whether they are as military or policeman. These volunteers have worked according to contracts with Multi-national forces. And this diagram shows the mechanism of receiving these recruits. Three, there are two stages to complete the recruitment in Baghdad. It includes 12,600 policemen. And the third stage, we aspire to reach the quiet level. That we are going to admit to receive about 45,000 volunteers. We have inspected the new recruits and we have screened them. As for the volunteers in the area of civil, we have opened two recruitment centers. One of them is in the Kimbal Garden of Qhohwine. And the second in the Mohana airport. And we have received the following members, the recruits. The new recruits should be residents of Sevilla. The number of the recruits in the Kimbal Garden of Qhohwine 187 and the number in Amathena airport 482 volunteers. The procedures of recruitment and the number of recruits are exhibited in this diagram. The third axis to increase the level of readiness for the Iraqi security forces. We're going to raise the level of the Iraqi security forces, working with the Operation Fardh al-Qanoon. In the Interior Ministry or in the First Ministry, we are going to rehabilitate the forces by training some units to raise the level of ordinance. And we have completed the training of all the national police. And we're going to train the Battalion or one platoon every week. And we're going to complete the other military formations. And we have added one infantry regiment of the national police. And we have two brigades in the army. We are going to raise the ability of these units to enable them to take part in Operation Fardh al-Qanoon and we are going to complete the recruitment of other units in coordination with the Multi-National Forces and the Ministry of Interior. In addition to all of this, we are seriously conducting some operations to replace the old rifles of the army by new American rifles and introduce a new recruitment in the Iraqi army. We're going to raise the level of readiness, not only through the number of units but also through experience. Our units have gained much experience during the last few months and our forces are now taking the initiative in the military operations. And the fourth axis. The security situation in the area of al-Fadhel. The operations carried out in al-Fadhel are special operations. We in these operations applied a principle of combatitivism. We isolated the bases of the terrorists from their support. And we have been able to do this threw

coordination with the Multi-National Forces and by cooperation of the residents of the area who discovered that the only solution is to unite against the terrorists after their areas have turned into areas for killing by terrorists. The operations started from beginning 17 August until October. And it resulted in driving out all the terrorist operations. We killed 48 terrorists, and the operations covered the neighboring areas. Life came to normal in the area of al-Fadhel. This area has special significance in the life of Baghdad. And we have restored the basic services. And more than 150 displaced families have returned to this area. I think that we as military commanders the enemy has been taught a lesson in this area. In the coming days the enemy will witness more defeats in other parts of Baghdad. Thank you very much. Peace be upon you and I'd like the commander of the Multi-National Core to take the podium.

ODIERNO: Ladies and gentlemen, Salam alikom. It's good to be here with you again. It's good to be here with Lieutenant General Abud Qanbar, commander of the Baghdad's Operation Command. Iraqi celebrated Eid ul-Fitr last week in their parks, restaurants and streets. It was wonderful to see. During last year's Eid this was not the case. The significant reduction in security incidents made this possible. Attack levels continue their steady downward trend that began in June and are now at their lowest levels since January 2006. Improvised Explosive Device attacks, the extremists preferred method of terror have also been reduced, down well over 60% in the past four months, with notably reduced lethality. I can site numerous statistics that show security is improving. However, the real indicator of improved security for me is how Iraqi people feel. And whenever I travel around Baghdad Iraqis tell me how much safer they feel in their neighborhoods. Over the last few months the leaders of Jihad, both Sunni and Shia, have worked hard to reduce violence in their area. They are having great success, and last week they came together and signed a reconciliation agreement. Yesterday, just five days after the signing of the reconciliation agreement, a group of government of Iraq officials visited Jihad to assess how to improve the services. I was honored to accompany this delegation of officials led by the National Reconciliation Committee and comprised of representatives of the Ministries of Health, Oil, and Trade, as well as the Provincial Council and the mayor. The officials met with local leaders and visited projects. They committed to getting the Farat hospital functioning again, to improve the delivery of oil, to return a sewage station to working order, to rebuild the mosques in Husaniyah. And the coalition and Iraqi security forces are committed to ensuring that the citizens of Jihad enjoy the benefits of their improved security situation. And we will work closely with the government to ensure they are able to deliver supplies and provide security to their personnel. And alongside the government, the coalition is providing substantial financial support to help the citizens of Jihad. Unfortunately, there are some individuals who are not interested in reconciliation. These individuals continue to use violence to incite sectarian hatred for political gain, to promote foreign interests and to achieve personal wealth through criminal activity. They commit extortion, kidnappings, intimidation and murder against the Iraqi people. We are working hard to prevent men who do this, such as Arkhan Asnawi, Nasr Anad al-Masawi, Haji Duwad, Ahmed Atu, Abu Bolil, and Haji Mahti from seeking sanctuary within Sadr City. They have not honored the ceasefire announced by Muqtada al-Sadr. And they only bring harm to the people of Sadr City. The coalition is committed to bringing security and assisting the

government of Iraq to build schools, improve infrastructure, and establish sustainable economic foundations to help establish a better future for the people of Sadr City and all of Iraq. Coalition forces and Iraqi security forces are dedicated to providing security to the Iraqi people. Our ability to do this has been greatly enhanced by volunteers coming forward to work with us, and by the general public giving us information about both terrorists and criminals. Local citizens across Iraq are taking back their communities. They are providing valuable information to the coalition and Iraqi security forces, seizing caches, and even detaining extremists to defend their homes. A movement that begun in largely Sunni areas is also beginning to become more prevalent in predominantly Shia areas. Bound together by the desire for peace and prosperity, the Iraqi people are overcoming differences to provide a better future for their children. I am encouraged by the improvements in the Iraqi security forces under the leadership of Lieutenant General Abud. Together the coalition and Iraqi security forces are working hard to protect the Iraqi population and remove dangerous elements. We take every effort to avoid civilian casualties. We deeply regret any harm done to civilians and immediately investigate when civilians are injured in military operations. As I travel the streets of Baghdad, I sense a new optimism. I'm encouraged by the improvements in the Iraqi security forces, by the local communities signing reconciliation agreements, and by local volunteers providing security in their neighborhoods. This is creating space to lay an economic foundation and improve essential services. We need to support the ground swell of public action against terrorism and extremism that has helped to create this space. Working closely with the government, we need to ensure that improved services are brought to the Iraqi people. I believe we are well on our way to making a lasting difference in Iraq. Coalition and Iraqi security forces remain committed to protecting the population and moving forward. The future holds great promise, and the Iraqi people have reason to begin to have some hope. Shukran. Thank you very much.

REP1: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: ...from al-Arabiya. I have two questions. General Abud, I have two questions. Operation Fardh al-Qanoon has been in law and killed many [unintelligible] but lately the operation was confined to Baghdad. What's the reason for that? When does Operation Fardh al-Qanoon end? Is it anytime time ceiling for the end of the operation?

UNK1: Speaking in Arabic.

ABUD: Speaking in Arabic.

INT: As for Operation Fardh al-Qanoon in combating terrorism there isn't any time for this. We cannot fix a time ceiling for the end of the operations.

REP2: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: Zina Khalini from al-Hadiyah. My first question to General Abud Qanbar. Operation Fardh al-Qanoon and [unintelligible] of security in Iraq. Will you provide security for the journalists? To this goal, there was a General Habib was kidnapped and a journalist was killed in [unintelligible]. My third question to General Raymond. General you said the Iraqi government have supported, have given financial support to the area of Jihad. Has this included the check points and other measures?

ABUD: Speaking in Arabic:

INT: As for the issue of kidnapping of the journalist people. We don't say that this issue has ended. We will continue to face this problem. But we can tell that operations of kidnapping eight months ago, the decrease is by 70%.

ODIERNO: If I could please. Jihad is really a great representation of Iraqi security forces, coalition forces, the local community – both Sunni and Shia – coming together to reject violence. They have proven that over the last 30 to 60 days with a significantly reduced amount of violence in that area. So we now have many volunteers working with both the Iraqi security forces and coalition forces to continue to bring stability to that area. We thought it would then be important for members of the government of Iraq to come down and pledge their support to this area because of the great work and cooperation that has been ongoing here. And we will continue to monitor that very closely, and we hope this will spread throughout all of Baghdad as we continue to move forward.

REP3: I wonder if both generals could answer this question, starting with General Odierno. General, we were told by General Fil of the 1st Cav Division about six weeks ago at the Pentagon that of all the neighborhoods in Baghdad now under control, roughly 8% are being retained by Iraqi forces, which obviously is a small number. Give me your senses of when do you believe Iraqi forces can take control of their own capital. One, two, three years with you in an overwatch position.

ODIERNO: Well, first, Iraqi security forces are in every mohalla in Baghdad with coalition forces. So all though they might not have it by themselves, they are operating with us every single day in every single mohalla in Baghdad. We will slowly turn it over over time. We have established, as you probably are aware, 34 joint security stations throughout Baghdad which are manned by police, Iraqi army, and coalition forces. And over time, we will slowly turn all of these over to the Iraqi army and the Iraqi police. I think you'll see steady progress over the next 12 months of us turning large portions of Baghdad over to Iraqi security forces. As we continue to have the success as outlined by both myself and General Abud today. And the bottom line is we want to make sure we continue to protect the population. And we're doing that in conjunction with each other. And we believe we can continue to do that with Iraqi security forces by themselves, we will do that. We are anxious for them to take over full responsibility. As well they're anxious to take over full responsibility. And we work closely together, and we will continue to do that as we move forward.

REP3: When you say large portions, ballpark 40, 50, 60%?

ODIERNO: I would say by the end of the year. Again, you all want me to look into a crystal ball and then a year from now you say while a year ago you said 50%, we're not at 50%. I will tell you I think it will be somewhere between 40-50% by the end of the year.

KEALY: Courtney Kealy Fox News. This is a question possibly for both of you but definitely for Lieutenant General Abud. When you talk about recruitment and the

success of police, especially police eventually taking over Baghdad. My question is what are you going to do about corruption and the lingering death squads? You talk about the recruitment in Sadiyah. Sadiyah is not a success story since the start of Fardh al-Qanoon. It was consumed with violence, sectarian bloodletting. And the Wolf Brigade, according to Iraqi and U.S. advisors, the police department had been put in there, and that's what led to it. How are you going to combat and make the police forces more transparent and less loyal to the Mehdi army?

ABUD: Speaking in Arabic.

INT: The national police is different from the local police. We have the traffic police and the emergency police. The national police and their units are more than Iraqi army forces working in Operation Fardh al-Qanoon. The national police play an important role in the carrying out of Operation Fardh al-Qanoon and have given many martyrs. Now we are building our military forces with allegiance to Iraq, as is the case with the Iraqi army. Army and police should be away from sectarianism and partisan. They should be loyal to Iraq. We are building our forces on this principle. We believe that policeman and Iraqi forces should be allegiant, should be loyal to the Iraqi people. But in every organization you find some extremists and fanatic people. And some people who are involved in corruption we refer them to justice and for the courts.

ODIERNO: If I could just...I agree with everything General Abud said. I would just add we all know that in the past, there's been sectarian violence, Sunni on Shia and Shia on Sunni. What we've seen over the last several months, though, is that that has come under control. There was still some there. But the most important thing in an area like Sadiyah today is that we have Iraq security forces cooperating with coalition forces, cooperating with local officials to try to solve the problem. And that's what we're seeing throughout Iraq and Baghdad. And I think that's very important as we move forward. That we are cooperating together to solve these problems so that Baghdad and Iraq are safe for all Iraqis. And I think that's the most important point. Thank you.

REP4: Ashada Janabi from [unintelligible]. My question to General Odierno. The air strikes against the densely populated area is inhumane because many civilians were killed during these air strikes. The government should think in a better way by activating the role of military intelligence by capturing these suspects instead of killing the innocent Iraqi people. Even the families of these suspected people now work. This is one more on the international level. We shouldn't hold people guilty by fault of others. This is also heavenly doctrine, you know. Even God said this in the Holy Book, Sir.

ODIERNO: Yeah. I absolutely agree that what we want to do is use the best intelligence possible to grab these individuals who are hiding behind the citizens throughout Baghdad and all of Iraq. And that's our goal. We never want any innocent civilians to be injured or killed or their homes destroyed. We don't want that. We are here to help the Iraqi people move forward. And when we conduct operations, we want to do it the best we can jointly with the Iraqi security forces to ensure that there is no innocents killed. Unfortunately it happened. And we do our best to investigate everything when it happens to hold people accountable and then make sure it doesn't

happen again. And we will continue to do this. What I ask all Iraqis is to help us with the intelligence, to take these individuals who are clearly conducting illegal operations against the people of Iraq through extortion, intimidation and murder, so we can take them off the streets, so we can move forward together and help the citizens of Iraq build their infrastructure, get clean water, get jobs, get food. And that's what we want to do. And that's our goal. And so I pledge we will work together with all Iraqi forces. And we will do the best we can to get the best intelligence, that we can conduct these operations in such a way where we eliminate completely any injuries to civilians.

JASSEM: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: Ahmad Jassem from al-Arabiya. My question to General Abud. What's your attitude about Sahwed al-Arap of the Council? And when I move in the streets I see many difficulties because of the barbed wires and blocked roads. My question to General Raymond? Will you call anew to set a time to...everybody is calling on you to set a timetable for withdrawal. Now I call on you to set a timetable for the reconstruction of Iraq. What is the result of reconstruction in Iraq? You know very well that actions which affected the Iraqi people and the Iraqi organizations and the Iraqi infrastructure. And you know very well that sewage systems and all the basic services have been completely destroyed. Thank you very much.

ABUD: The first question. The answer of command of operational Baghdad for recruitment has raised the level the national reconciliation. One of the principles adopted in combating terrorism is to win the people and to isolate the enemy. That's why we see in these principles an effective way to combat terrorism and put an end to insurgency. The second question, as for the concrete barriers...these procedures in while combating terrorism do not aim to gain literally accomplishments at the expense of the people. These procedures stem from the principle of combating terrorism to provide security to the people and prevent car bombs. And criminals they will work to prevent them from crossing to the people. We have set these check points although to compensate for the lack of and shortages of military forces. These are temporary concrete barriers, and we are going to lift them after the improvement of the security situation. These procedures were not implemented in Iraq for the first time. Many countries have this happened. In Germany and the Berlin wall and the U.S. and Argentina and Brazil and in Mexico. And in the U.K. and Ireland and Moscow and the Philippines and Saudi Arabia. All these countries have implemented these concrete barriers. That's all for the concrete barriers, thank you.

ODIERNO: Just to answer the question he asked me about a timeline for reconstruction. It's very difficult to set a timeline. What I will tell you is the fact that we have improved security enables us now to focus a bit more on the basic services, bringing them to the Iraqi people. And we are very much intending to do that with a large effort. But it must be a cooperative effort between the government of Iraq and their officials and coalition in order to work with the citizens where we have the secure areas and are helping to bring secure areas to improve their infrastructure. The Iraqis have been extremely resilient and patient in waiting for these services to return. And we

understand we must try to do it as quickly as possible. And we will do everything we can to move forward as quickly as possible.

BAYS: General, James Bays from al-Jazeera English. Yesterday the government of Iraq pledged to the Turkish Foreign Minister to do all it could to stop PKK operations inside Iraq. If the Iraqi government asks coalition forces for assistance in any military operation, are you ready to assist?

ODIERNO: Well first, anything we do with this we'll obviously do in conjunction. We'll work with the government of Iraq to deal with this problem. But I would tell you also as we always do, we must then work with our own policymakers in Washington to decide what our action would be. We are coordinating with them on a regular base. We are sharing information with them. We will continue to do that. And as it progresses we will make decisions. And that will be based on...I will give my military advice on what I think the best things to do. But ultimately it will come down to a policy decision on what we do or do not do regarding Turkey.

REP5: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: Salima Bihd from Arai. My question to General Abud Qanbar. Why the military operations have increased in Sadr City? And about the awakening councils...will these councils up lie in Mahmudiyah and southern Iraq? Could you please return your pictures of the question? About the operations in Sadr City...will there be any more awakening councils in Mahmudiyah and Lutafiyah to get rid of al-Qaida organizations.

ABUD: As for your first question. We are working according to military intelligence. Whenever we find any target the military forces and the security forces will target these. And we do not focus on Sadr City in particular. Wherever any military activities, our Iraqi military forces can target these activities. And the night of the 21st of October is a well-known incident. But there are some targets which have been attacked without any casualties. As in the area of Mahmudiyah, we have the biggest recruitment drive now then of the new recruits in Mahmudiyah sphere of 3,500 new recruits. And we are going to introduce them to the Iraqi police and Iraqi forces.

ODIERNO: I would just say that if you look back six months ago, or eight months ago, or nine months ago, very few people would have predicted where we are in terms of security in Baghdad and the rest of Iraq today. But that didn't come by just hoping for security. That came because we had extremely dedicated and hard work by Iraqi security forces, the Iraqi leadership, coalition forces. But most importantly the citizens who have rejected al-Qaida, who have rejected them conducting operations inside of Iraq. We're tired of the intimidation by these groups. Because they want to move forward. And we will continue to move forward as much as we can now, focusing on continued improvement of security and focusing on bringing basic services to the people of Iraq as we move forward. I want to say finally that it's an honor every day to be associated with the Iraqi security forces. I have a lot of respect for General Abud and his leadership he has shown here since he's been the commander. And I also cherish his friendship. And

we will continue to work together here in Iraq to provide better security for the people.
Thank you.